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## THE CARDONA TOMB AT BELLPUIG

THE only way to know about anything is to go and look: this platitude, like other moral injunctions, is oftener repeated than applied. Yet nothing else will serve. The opinion of one's master, the description of one's companion, the best of photographs, will not yield the secrets that personal study on the spot can solve. The tomb of D. Ramon de Cardona, at Bellpuig in Catalonia (Fig. 1), is one of those monuments of art to which all manuals refer and which relatively few persons have seen. In consequence:—first, one book copies from another the unqualified attribution to Giovanni da Nola; second, it passes for imported Italian work; and thirdly, it is cited to prove that Spain was so dependent on Italy that her sculpture was not only copied but imported bodily. None of this is tenable in front of the tomb. On the contrary, after consideration it appears that



FIGURE 1.—TOMB OF D. RAYMOND OF CARDONA: BELLPUIG.

Spanish ideas were in control, and on investigation, thereafter, that Spanish influence in Naples may easily be accounted for.

Always on inspection unsuspected differences and likenesses become apparent. So, in Bellpuig, where by hearsay there was "only an overloaded Italian tomb," the strong sunlight directly after noon revealed, to one fresh from Naples and the abundant and known work of Giovanni da Nola, two distinct styles. An advantage of taking one's own photographs is that one has to stay and look at the object for several hours without intermission, and in that time, impressions are slowly formed. The mind is as sensitive as the photographic plate, but for neither is the best result instantaneous. The belief there formed and recorded in the notebook was that the Virgin a-top, the sarcophagus, the relief of a sea-fight, and perhaps the two friezes are by Giovanni da Nola. For the sirens and the half-length girls, with the pilasters, he is not responsible. From his designs, but not from his hand, are the *putti* and the Rachael and Leah figures, with the seated figures above, together with the scheme of the whole. The hypothesis would be that he prepared the drawings, under Spanish influence, in Naples, did the most important parts, and left the remainder probably to Genoese masters. On the base is carved: *Joannes Nolanus faciebat*.<sup>1</sup>

Raymond of Cardona was victor at Mazalquivir in 1505, and the battle there is probably the sea-fight depicted on his tomb. In 1510 Ferrand I made him Viceroy of Naples; in 1513 he delivered Milan from the French and Genoa from the Venetians; in 1522 he died at Naples. The Franciscan convent of Bellpuig he had founded fifteen years before, the bull of Julius II being dated early in 1507. His widow, Doña Isabel Cardona y Requesens, ordered his tomb for that church from Giovanni da Nola and buried him meanwhile in Castelnuovo. Nine years later the body, still incorrupt, was received at Bellpuig "in a chest closed by two keys" and deposited in the great tomb.

On March 15, 1531, says a notarial act still in existence, "*positum fuit in monumentum in eadem Ecclesia situm, et sua effigie a famosissimo artifice Joanne de Nola, perfectissima arte construc-*

<sup>1</sup> There is a short study of Giovanni da Nola in Frizzoni, *Arte Italiana nel Rinascimento*, pp. 83-88. Various references are scattered through the volumes of *Napoli Nobilissima*; the passage cited later from Benedetto Croce's researches into the records of Spanish artists and craftsmen in Naples, will be found there, Vol. IV, p. 12.

tum.”<sup>1</sup> All travellers admired it: “the most sumptuous monument of the arts that there is in Catalonia,” said Ponz, and again, “coming back to Juan Nolano, he well deserves to be accounted as one of the great men who flourished when the noble arts were emerging from the shadows.”<sup>2</sup> Céan Bermúdez sets down under the year 1524, in his index of sculptors, “Juan Nolano in Cataluña.”<sup>3</sup>

When the convent was exclaustated the tomb was neglected, and opened casually to show to any chance traveller the tall body of the great Captain-General of the Church. Piferrer<sup>4</sup> reported indignantly that a crowbar for this use lay across the sarcophagus: the golden sword of Julius II had disappeared at the time that the French went through. In 1809 they had come to Bellpuig, and with comings and goings stayed there about four months: they wrecked the church, violated the tomb, broke the statues, stole the gold hilt of the sword, and probably destroyed the banners which had been taken in great battles. When the French had gone the Spaniards, who were keeping Lérida, turned the convent into a military hospital and did more damage. From 1816 to 1829 the friars were restoring it, but in 1835 they were turned out and the townsfolk at leisure looted the place. At last the monument was transferred to the parish church; the work took from December 13, 1841, till May 11, 1842, and another notarial act certifies to the regularity of the translation, and preserves the names of the ducal representative, the clerical committee, and the municipal authorities, the masons and their assistants, and the supervising architect. The urns on the top were probably his invention, and parts of the dress of the hermes.

How badly the tomb had been damaged in 1809 and 1835 we have no way to know, but the work took fifty-nine cartloads of marble and much more of ordinary stone and building material. “A great altar fabricated of the said marbles and statues,” the document calls it, and in description is more concerned with preserving the inscriptions than itemizing the sculptures.

<sup>1</sup> Valeri Serra y Boldú, *Lo Convent de Bellpuig*, p. 15. The facts are drawn from this study and Piferrer's *Cataluña* (written in conjunction with Pi Margall and revised a generation later by A. A. Pijoan), II, pp. 259-312.

<sup>2</sup> Ponz, *Viaje de España*, XIV, letter v.

<sup>3</sup> *Diccionario de los mas illustres profesores de las bellas artes*, VI, p. 109. There is no biography of Juan Nolano and I have been unable to discover the reference in the foregoing five volumes or to explain where he got the date.

<sup>4</sup> Piferrer, *op. cit.* notes on pp. 309 and 312 f.

Of these inscriptions there are three: below, on the left, one says:—*Servavi thalamum genie dulcissime conjux, servandus nunc est pro thalamo tumulus.* Another, corresponding, on the right, reads: *Ornasti et manes lacrimis miserabilis uxor haud optare alias fas erat inferius.* The most important crowns the whole, where a pediment might be: *Raimundo Cardonae qui Regnum Neapolitanum prerrogativa pene regia tenens gloriam sibi ex mansuetudine comparavit, Ysabella uxor infelix marito opt. fecit. Vix.*

*ann. XXXXXIII  
mens. VIII diebus VI.  
ann. M. D. XXII.*



FIGURE 2.—CENTRAL PORTION OF TOMB OF  
D. RAYMOND OF CARDONA.

The tomb will recall to the traveller at first glance the two monuments by Sansovino in S. Maria del Popolo (1505-7), but the difference is great. It looks more like a triumphal arch or portal and the niche is deeper (Fig. 2). For the ecclesiastical figure dozing uncomfortably is substituted a young knight sleeping on his armor. This is a favorite motive in Spanish tomb sculpture, as

may be seen, for instance, among the almost nameless tombs in the south transept at Avila (Fig. 3). It is slightly modified in that of the Count of Tendilla (now in S. Ginés de Guadalajara), who died in 1479; or that, better known, at Sigüenza, of Martin Vázquez de Arce, whom the Moors killed in 1486.<sup>1</sup> The intention of it is, always, the Spanish ideal of knighthood. The depth of the recess is also a Spanish trait, for while Italian tombs have the

<sup>1</sup> The Avila tombs I have photographed, but I think they are unpublished; those of Guadalajara and Sigüenza may be found in the admirable work of Ricardo de Orueta, *La Escultura Funeraria en España*, in the volume for Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Guadalajara, pp. 110-160.

air of being developed from a wall slab, the Spanish derive from the *arcosolium*. The Gothic tombs of Leon, or Burgos, or of the Old Cathedral of Salamanca, show this, and show the tympanum under the arch occupied by a religious scene. Here the lunette is filled with a Pietà, equally suitable for its place in theme and in composition.

The statues that flank the recess are a trifle too large for their niches and the pattern on their bases recurs nowhere else. The one on the left, with oak bough and helmet, presents probably some allegory of strength in government and war; the one on the right, who has lost her hands and with them her attributes, shows more *recueillement* and stands probably for some aspect of faith. From roundels above emerge half-lengths of buxom nymphs, with

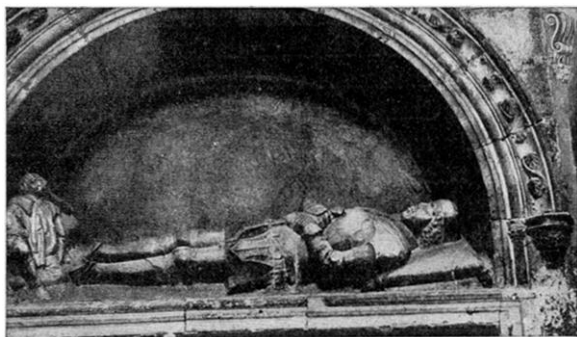


FIGURE 3.—TOMB OF A YOUNG KNIGHT: AVILA CATHEDRAL.

the laurel wreath and the olive bough. A pair of seated prophets or evangelists on top of the cornice are reduced to holding shields: that on the left is like a young warrior; the right-hand figure is brooding and very lovely. Over all a Madonna, up-borne in her mandorla of cherub-heads by gay young girl-angels, is perfectly Florentine.

The artist had thought it enough for the great admiral to set on his sarcophagus a frieze of marine deities, exquisite in design: the squatting, web-footed sirens which sustain it, though their funereal significance here is a curious survival of the Greek motive, are plastically an unhappy afterthought. In the spandrels above appear, on one side, the crane that occupies the same place at Ripoll, and on the other the pot of lilies that is the Virgin's *impresa* all over Spain. Now the cornice of cranes and lily pots is cer-

tainly from Giovanni da Nola's hand, and I am at a loss how to interpret it; the rest is plain enough, one side being given to the active and one to the contemplative life, and Our Lady set in the midst in her joy and her sorrow.

Giovanni da Nola lived in Naples all his days, working for Spaniards and with Spaniards. So much we know, but not much more.<sup>1</sup> At one moment in the church of Monte Oliveto, between Rossellino's lovely tomb and Benedetto's lovely altar, his art rises high as that of Girolamo da Santacroce, and, as tourists and compilers betray, you could not tell the one from the other. At S. Giovanni a Carbonara he was employed long, and Vasari, who also worked there and should know, says explicitly: "the altar-piece of that chapel [of the Marchese di Vico], in which are half-reliefs of the Magi making offerings to Christ, is by the hand of a Spaniard." Thence he proceeds to a story of a competition between this Spaniard and Girolamo da Santacroce.

In S. Giovanni a Carbonari work was going on from 1516 to 1557. The relief of Christ carried to his grave is by "Giovanni di Prato Spagnuolo," says Benedetto Croce. This sculptor is, however, usually referred to as the Spaniard Pietro delle Plate or da Prato,—for instance, by Eugène Müntz. His name was probably Pere Prat, which is good Catalan. He is presumably the man who built the parish church of S. Elmo in the Castle for D. Pedro de Toledo, the Viceroy's cousin, in 1547, where a stone still says: *Aedem hanc, opera et artificio Petri Prati Hispani Facundum cur idemque approbavit anno a Christi nato M D X L VIII*. He made also, perhaps, says Croce, the statues of the sepulchre of Andrea Bonifacio and G. B. Cicara (which Frizzoni attributes to Giovanni da Nola) in the church of S. Severino. The point is that there *was* a Spaniard, that Giovanni, exceedingly sensitive and variable, was subjected to Spanish influence directly.

"He made a tomb for D. Pedro de Toledo, Marquis of Villafranca, and his wife, who were then resident in Naples, in which he made an infinity of stories of the victories that lord gained over the Turks, with many statues which are in that work, all set separate and carved out with much diligence. It was to have been carried into Spain, but that not having been done in his

<sup>1</sup> Vasari, *Le Vite*, ed. Sansoni, 1880, V, pp. 93-96. Milanese (and certainly Perkins after him, *Handbook of Italian Sculpture*, pp. 366-369) relied on De Dominici, who was finally shown up by Benedetto Croce in 1893 in *Napoli Nobilissima*, I, p. 143.

lifetime, it stayed in Naples:" so Vasari. Coming upon it, behind the altar in S. James of the Spaniards, one feels instantly how Spanish it is. M. Müntz<sup>1</sup> feels that it proceeds from the tomb of François I at S. Denis, which is impossible; but there is some connection to trace between this and the tomb that Giovanni Giusti and his brothers made and set up in Tours for Louis XII and Anne of Brittany. That, however, is not the present purpose, which is strictly the Cardona tomb.

Of the elements of this composition there is no need to speak at great length. As already said, in general form it is less flat than the Florentine and Venetian tombs and more architectonic than the earlier Neapolitan. The formula on the whole is very near to the contemporary altars thereabouts, as Mino da Fiesole's tombs in the Badia and altar at Fiesole are reducible to one formula, or, similarly, Sansovino's S. Spirito altar and his Roman tombs. The relief on the base is found on Girolamo da Santacroce's beautiful altar at Monte Oliveto as well as Giovanni da Nola's pendant to that. It had already been employed on Donatello's tomb at S. Nilo, and was to be used on the tombs made for D. Pedro de Toledo, for Louis XII, and for François I. The critics who disallow Giovanni's historical low-reliefs on the tombs of great captains forget that these are legitimately inherited from the narrative reliefs of Donatello. The hermes and *putti* are found on Giovanni's altars at SS. Severino e Sosio; and *putti* even more like, and a Pietà less dramatic but more plastic, on another altar there, with a relief of the dead Christ below.

In the work on these altars and that done completely under Florentine influence at the church of Monte Oliveto, in 1536, Giovanni da Nola remains completely within the limits of space that the great Quattrocentists accepted—as though the statue were carved from an oblong rectangle of marble not very deep: this, indeed, is one of the secrets of their beauty, as with the early Greek "athlete" statues. The same thing is true of the flanking figures here. In the tomb of Julius II, the Rachael and Leah of Michelangelo are about the same in proportion as those of the

<sup>1</sup> *La Renaissance en Italie*, III, pp. 439–440. D. Ramon died in 1522, the tomb was set up in 1531; the tomb of Louis XII was on hand 1516–1532; D. Pedro built S. Giacomo degli Spagnuoli in 1540 and his tomb was finished before he died in 1556; François I died in 1547 and the tomb was completed in 1559; Gouse, *La sculpture française*, pp. 93–98.



Cardona tomb, but their sobriety, precisely, has led critics to question their date. The trait is archaic. On the other hand, in the half-figures of girls above, the Nolan has abandoned that canon. The unlikely things, and the unsatisfactory, like the substi-

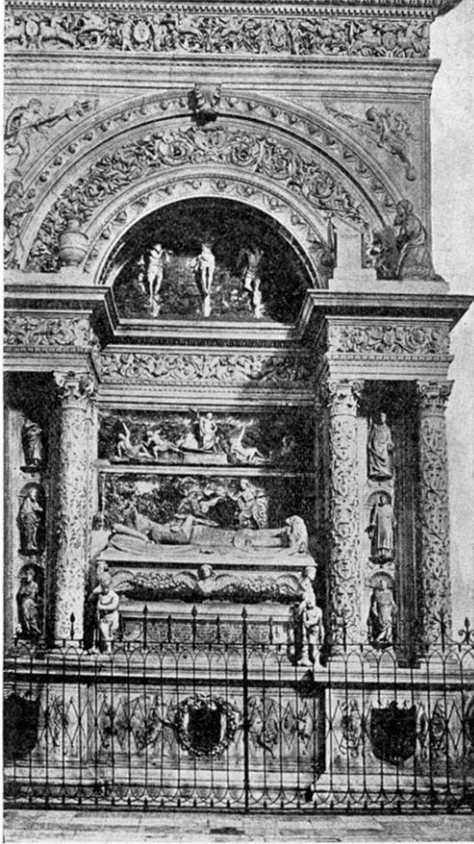


FIGURE 4.—TOMB OF D. PEDRO HENRÍQUEZ DE RIBERA: UNIVERSITY CHURCH: SEVILLE.

tution of a sea-shell for an Ionic volute, and the trophies on the pilasters, do not look like Naples. They look, to say truth, like Genoa. Lombard and Ligurian taste relished things of that sort. One thing we know, that innumerable Spanish tombs were made up at Genoa;<sup>1</sup> from the marble quarries of Carrara it was easy to ship thither, and to Barcelona and Seville it was easy to ship thence. Bartolomé Ordoñez and many another stayed too long in Genoa on just such business.

As you sit and look, this tomb still seems less Italian than the account of it will read, with its dramatic relief set into the niche behind, as Spanish Gothic sculp-

<sup>1</sup> It is worth recalling Vasari: "This same marble then [of Pietrasanta] the moderns of today use for their statues, not only in Italy, but in France, England, Spain, and Portugal, as can be seen today in the tomb executed in Naples by Giovanni da Nola the excellent sculptor, for D. Pedro de Toledo, viceroy of that kingdom to whom all the marbles were presented and sent to Naples by Duke Cosimo de' Medici." *Vasari on Technique*, L. S. Maclehorse and Baldwin Brown, p. 47. *Le Vite*, Sansoni edition, I, p. 120.

tors carved the funeral procession behind the defunct, for instance at Saragossa and Tudela, or enthroned the Saviour or His Mother in the lunette, as already said. Other like things may be found in Spain. There is still, in Seville, a pair of Ribera tombs (Figs. 4 and 5) made for the Charterhouse by the brimming river, and signed by good North Italians in 1520. Ponz,<sup>1</sup> who saw them there in the eighteenth century, copied out the inscriptions: *Antonius Maria de Charona hoc opus faciebat in Janua*; and the other, *Opus Pacegazini faciebat in Janua*. The former, Antonio Maria de Carona, was almost certainly living and working in Seville ten years later; it is probable that he went back and forth between Italy and Spain as business demanded. Gestoso y Perez<sup>2</sup> publishes an item to the effect that "Antonio Maria Ginovés" was paid for the step of the *altar mayor* and for the *trascoro* in 1534, adding: "Is he the Genoese sculptor Antonio Maria de Aprile de Carona? We incline to think so." The Gazzini similarly went to Sicily and worked for Spaniards there.



FIGURE 5.—TOMB OF DOÑA CATALINA DE RIBERA: UNIVERSITY CHURCH: SEVILLE.

<sup>1</sup> Ponz, *Viage de España*, VIII, pp. 236-237.

<sup>2</sup> Gestoso y Perez, *Ensayo de un Diccionario*, I, p. 221. Cf. Ricci, *Art in Northern Italy*, p. 236, on the Aprile and Gazzini families; also Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la Scultura in Sicilia*, passim.

The likeness of Aprile's tomb to that at Cardona will appear from the photographs, without need of discussion: by architectonic quality, by the decoration, the side statues, the lunette, the relief within the recess, above all, by the style in precisely such matters as acquaintance with Giovanni da Nola did not explain. So the Ribera tombs explain the Cardona, and confirm by their signatures what was conjectural there.

It has been proved, then, that of the tomb at Bellpuig the theme, the effigy, and the architectural use of a deep niche and reliefs are entirely Spanish, and while the symbolical figures, the Virgin, and the friezes are Neapolitan their significance is still Spanish; the rest was made up at Genoa, where many Spaniards were engaged, and whence the native workmen went often to Spain and came home and went back again.

Spanish ideas, then, were in control in this work, Spanish tradition was in communication, at Naples and Genoa alike, in the first half of the cinquecento; and all these are Spanish tombs, though executed in Italy.

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